

Recent Scams



Lottery Winner Scam

This con game has been going on since the lottery was instituted in the state. The fake lottery winner scam is usually pulled on Spanish-speaking victims but some victims were English-only speakers. Over the years, the scam has been pulled numerous times in the downtown Miami Springs area, usually in the area of the grocery store.

Here's the way it works: A Hispanic man (or a woman in a few cases) will approach a target and say that he has just won the multi-million dollar Florida Lottery. He will show a counterfeit winning ticket and say that he can't collect his winnings because he's an illegal alien. While he is pitching his line, another person (a man or woman) will stop by and join in the conversation. The second person is an accomplice. The so-called lottery winner will offer to share his millions with anyone who will put up "good-faith" money.

The con man's accomplice will readily agree in order to encourage the victim to do the same. Once the target is convinced to put up money to share in the millions, the two crooks will accompany the victim home and to the bank to gather all the cash he or she can acquire. The cons will usually convince the victim to use his or her car for the trip to the bank. Once the criminals see the money, they will tell the victim to put it into an envelope, allegedly with the cash put up by the accomplice.

Using distraction, the cons will switch envelopes and then make an excuse to get out of the car and say that they will return shortly. When the victim tires of waiting, he or she will find nothing but paper inside the envelope. Lottery scammers mainly target Hispanic middle-aged people and senior citizens. Unfortunately, few swindlers are ever caught, and police believe that some victims don't report the crime because they are embarrassed.

Unlicensed Contractors

In these tough economic times it's difficult turning down a bargain but unlicensed contractors should be avoided because they are known for doing shoddy work or not completing the job. The way to avoid becoming a victim is to ask the contractor for credentials. A professional contractor should have no problem providing identification and license numbers. An added protection would be to write down a contractor's vehicle tag number and take a photo of the man or woman. Those things might make homeowners uncomfortable but residents should stick to their requirements. Be mindful that illegitimate contractors will have alleged reasons for not providing proof: they haven't received their license yet, they just applied the day before, or they don't carry it with them. Not good enough. Protect yourself by checking things out. Always check the license of a company or individual by logging onto www.myflorida.com/licensee or calling the Department of Business and Professional Regulation at 850-487-1395. When Online Type in the name of the individual, company or license number. If there is no license, report the

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person or company by calling: 866-532-1440. Don't believe stories according to the regulatory agency, if there is a license, it will appear on the website. A website check will tell you if the license is current and in good standing. Also, complaints and disciplinary actions are public record.

Written Word

Get everything in writing, including a detailed description of any work to be done. Make sure the writing is legible. Do not sign a certificate of completion unless you are totally satisfied with the work.

Thefts at Gas Pumps

The crime of stealing purses from vehicles at gas stations is a common occurrence. Here's the way it works: A woman is busy pumping gas when a person pulls up next to her car, opens the opposite door or reaches into an open window, and grabs the woman's purse. Then the thief drives away. Sometimes criminals work in pairs, and while one distracts the victim usually with a question, his accomplice steals the purse. In a few instances, victims were men who had left a wallet or bank bag on the front seat. Locking your car while at the gas pumps is a deterrent but in a few instances, a thief broke a window to steal a purse while the victim was inside the service station/convenience store. Besides the monetary loss, a stolen purse or wallet means you have to get new identification, driver's license, checkbook, in addition to canceling credit cards and having your locks changed if keys were in the purse. The key to avoid becoming a victim is to lock your car and not let yourself become distracted.

Phony Repairman Attacks Woman

Pompano Beach police said a man attempted to rape a woman in her home but fled when he was bitten by the woman's Boston terrier. The victim said the man wore a gray uniform and baseball cap and carried a clipboard. She believed he was a legitimate repairman because she had asked her landlord to have a broken thermostat repaired. When the man attacked the woman, the dog bit the attacker on the shoulder and he fled.

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